



JULIE LASSA

STATE SENATOR

Testimony for Senate Bill 292
Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations
Wednesday, September 30, 2009
10:30 AM
400 Southeast
State Capitol

Good Morning Chairman Risser and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 292, which creates a minor change to allow the Wisconsin Historical Society Press to print paperback books in the same method as hardcover books.

Currently the Historical Society is exempted from using the state printing contract for its hard cover books and for the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*; however, paperback books are not provided with this same exemption. As a result, the Society has had challenges with the quality of the printing of its paperback publications, including returns by customers for refunds. Based on research into the history of this provision, the intent of the statute as drafted in 1945 was to provide an exemption for all Society publications intended for sale and that changes in the book market have distorted the original intent of the law.

In 1945, paperback books were a relatively new form of publication and the words "hard cover" were included in the statute to distinguish between books published by the Society (which in the 1940s only appeared in hard cover) as opposed to routine pamphlets and other printing done by the Society. Today, however, customers expect books to be available in high quality paperbacks. The requirement that paperback books intended for the retail market have to be printed on the state contract puts the Society at a competitive disadvantage and hurts its ability to support its programs through earned revenue.

If the words "hard cover" were deleted from the statute, it would provide an exemption identical to that provided to the University of Wisconsin Press, which currently publishes both hardcover and paperback books and is exempt from using the state printing contract. The end result of this change will be a more effective approach to printing, an increase in the quality of the work, and an additional opportunity to generate earned revenues.



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**Testimony before the Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations
2009 Senate Bill 292
September 30, 2009**

I am Michael Stevens and am Administrator of the Division of Historic Preservation-Public History at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Society supports SB292. A relatively minor change to a law enacted in 1945 would enable the Society Press to print books in the same fashion granted to the University of Wisconsin Press and allow improved earned revenues from sales for the Society with no impact on GPR.

Under Wisconsin Statutes 35.01(3), the Society is exempted from using the state printing contract for its hard cover books and for the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. Paperback books are not provided with this exemption because the Society published only hardcover books in 1945 when the law was changed. Based on our research into the history of this provision, we believe that the intent of the bill drafters in 1945 was to provide an exemption for all Society publications intended for resale. Changes in the market, in which buyers expect high quality paperbacks, have distorted the original intent of the law.

Currently, the Society has challenges with the quality of the printing of its paperback publications using the Class 3 contract. Books printed under the Class 3 contract in the past 2 years have resulted in higher damaged return rates, averaging 400 to 600 copies returned for \$3,000-4,000 in refunds, as compared with a normal average of 30 to 50 damaged returns or \$250-\$300 in refunds.

Deleting the words "hard cover" from the statute would provide an exemption identical to that provided to the University of Wisconsin Press, which currently publishes both hardcover and paperback books. The Society would still use the competitive bid process to secure printers. Only 3-4 books per year out of our average of 12 titles per year would fall under the Class 3 contract. This contract is intended to save time in the bid process for printing and works well for forms, booklets, and pamphlets not designed to be sold in the retail market. However, due to special finishes and non-standard trim sizes, which are necessary to compete in the retail/trade market and to stand up to retail, school, and library standards, effectively using the Class 3 contract takes production and fiscal services staff more time than for a standard book print bid.

The Society developed a bid template that addresses the special needs of its program, and this template saves a great deal of time over having to negotiate the changes from the Class 3 contract. Using our template takes approximately 2 hours of staff time to prepare as compared with 4 to 5 hours required to look up prices in the price charts, look for where our specifications differ from the standards in the contract (trim size, cover coatings, etc), and call to get new quotes for the revised specifications and then go through a different vendor for paper. Nearly all of the Society books require some sort of revision to the standard specifications for this class of printing.

There are companies in Wisconsin who can do the type and quality work required by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, but generally these are not the holders of the state contract. The end result of this minor change in the law will be a more effective approach to printing, increase in the quality of the work, and assist in generating earned revenues.